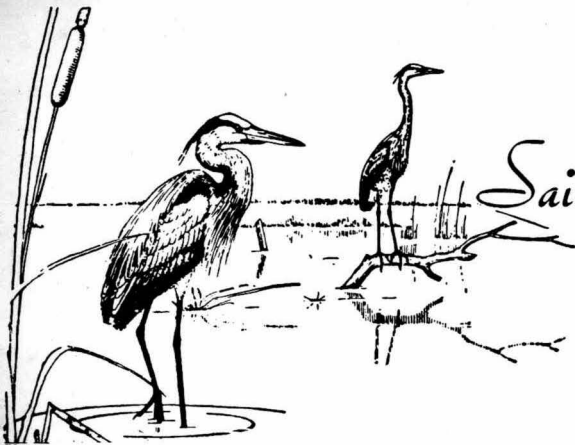




Saint Louis Audubon Bulletin

March, 1965

Vol. 33, No. 2

ALBERTA OUTDOORS MARCH 12, 1965 Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington 8:15 p. m.

Topographically, Alberta is one of the most interesting of Canadian Provinces. The southern section of the Province is a rolling plain, the central section a region of parklands and rich farming country, and much of the north an untamed wilderness, broken only by the Peace River Block.

During the winter months, many Arctic birds migrate and winter in the Province, while resident birds and animals stray from their summer haunts in the foothills and mountains to other sections of Alberta.

Edgar T. Jones of Edmonton, Alberta, has produced a full length color film of the wildlife and plant life, as well as the magnificent scenery of his Province.

In *Alberta Outdoors*, Audubon audiences will see many different birds and animals of the Province, among them, moose, elk, the Canada lynx, hordes of bohemian waxwings, pine and evening grosbeaks, and the snowy owl. With the coming of spring, we witness the thrilling snow goose migration with 15,000 geese in one field. Very early in the spring, the great horned owls, the great gray owls, and the goshawks set up housekeeping.

Ed Jones spent three years with another naturalist searching the wilderness for the seldom seen great gray owl. During the extensive search, over 30,000 miles were covered by auto, 450 miles by horseback, and many more miles by foot. Only during the third year, were the men successful in locating two nests of the great gray owl and photographing this diminishing species in its natural habitat.

Edgar T. Jones is not only a photographer and a naturalist, but a pilot and an artist as well.

From an early age, he has always had a keen interest in wildlife and in the out-of-doors. Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Ed Jones has traveled many thousands of miles throughout the Canadian wilderness — into and beyond the Arctic coastal areas, studying and photographing wildlife and natural phenomena.

As a bomber pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Ed Jones served overseas during World War II and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar. On his return to civilian life, he formed in northern Canada a bush flying charter service, transporting trappers, prospectors, and Indians through all parts of the north.

Alberta Outdoors offers audiences a trip to one of the most beautiful parts of Canada, guided by an expert naturalist and dedicated conservationist.

SPRING BIRD WALKS OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Bird walks are scheduled for Forest Park on the last two Sundays in April and the first two Sundays in May.

Sunday, April 18

Sunday, April 25

Sunday, May 2

Sunday, May 9

Meeting Place: Parking lot behind Art Museum

Time: 7:30 A.M.

Information: Call Chairman of Walks, Martin Schweig, Jr., FO 1-4226

There will be two Saturday birds walks—

Saturday, April 24

Saturday, May 1

Meeting place: Tower Grove entrance Missouri Botanical Garden.

Time: 8 A. M.

Leaders will be on hand. For information call: YO 5-8642.

If any changes are made in these plans a card will go out to members.

An anonymous donor has given the Audubon Society 6 pair of brand new binoculars. These are to be made available to people making field trips who do not possess binoculars. Glasses of this magnification enable participants to get a much better view of birds which are often seen only at a considerable distance. These 6 pair will be supplemented by 4 additional pair now en route so the Audubon Society will have 10 pair to loan out. Our sincere thanks to this anonymous donor for help in making our field trips more attractive.

WILDLIFE FILM CALENDAR

In addition to the program to be presented on Friday, March 12, there will be 2 more Audubon wildlife films in this season's series. The dates are as follows:

Friday, April 23, 1965 — Friday, May 7, 1965

The one scheduled for Friday, May 7, will be at the Clayton High School on Mark Twain Circle. To reach this location enter from Maryland Avenue at the headquarters building of Brown Shoe Company.

There will probably be another lecture for our annual Loyalty Night. Announcement concerning this will be made later.

AFRICAN BIRD SAFARI

By BERTHA MASSIE

Africa isn't what you think! How many times we were reminded of this comment by Dr. Mildred Trotter when she learned that we were going to Africa on a birding jaunt. Jungle, heat, snakes and insects were expected along with the birds and animals.

More than half of tropical Africa consists of savanna with grasses, bushes and trees adapted to conditions of alternating dryness and raininess, and thorn trees, particularly the Umbrella Thorn (*Acacia sieberiana*) the dominant feature in most of the areas we visited. The only unbearably hot spot on the entire trip was Lisbon, Portugal, not Africa, even though we spent an entire month within a couple of degrees of the equator. Africa is a high plateau with the elevations compensating for the latitude. Snakes . . . we did see three and two of these were dead! Our adequate supply of "Off" (insect repellent) remained practically untouched.

Trying to describe seven weeks of birding with a Crowder Nature Tour, on a continent the size of Africa (three times the area of the continental United States), with sightings of more than 600 different birds, along with

60 varieties of mammals, is beyond the scope of this type of article. So we shall confine ourselves to one of the highlight spots birdwise—Ndumu Game Reserve located in the northern Zululand area of South Africa.

Our guest leader for this portion of the trip was the able and enthusiastic Curator of Ornithology for the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria—Mr. O. Prozesky. (We hope that Proz will be able to visit the United States and St. Louis in 1966 under the sponsorship of the World Nature Club, an organization that is being set up to promote contact and interchange of information, at a subprofessional level, between bird and wildflower enthusiasts on a world scale.)

In the South African game reserves and parks, one usually is housed in rondavels, small round cabins for two, copied after the native huts—but Ndumu was different—here we had squaredavels. We had been warned to expect somewhat primitive accommodations in these preserves . . . there were no private baths but we did have electricity and running water. (Not exactly primitive after our back-pack jaunts.)

Accommodationwise, Ndumu is small—only seven squaredavels. This reserve contains approximately 25,000 acres and is located 35 miles from the nearest village, the spot at which the drivers of our Mercedes Benz safari buses stocked up on food since they had to do the cooking for us. (The small game areas in South Africa have kitchens but no food service.) The camp is located on a 479 foot hill; all else is low lying well watered land with reeds bordering the crocodile and hippo filled lakes. Sycamore figs dominate the beautiful forest at the confluence of the Pongola and Usutu rivers. (The Usutu marks the boundary between Zululand and Mozambique.)

Our day (at least Joel's did) started at 5:00 A.M. with magnificent stars and an absence of electric lights, so shaving was done by torchlight (flashlight). The early walk was on the camp grounds where we watched a pair of Cardinal Woodpeckers (*Dendropicos fuscescens*) going in and out of their nest hole. Unfortunately a predator spoiled what was to have been the "piece de resistance"—the Pearl-spotted Owlet (*Glaucidium perlatum*) had been eaten and we saw only the ground nest with cold eggs. All was forgotten when we saw the striking Purple-crested Loerie or Turaco (*Gallirex porphyreolophus*). The red and green coloration in the Turaco results from pigmentation rather than the usual refraction.

After breakfast, the open Land Rovers in which we sat on boards, took us down to the lowland area where we saw our first Black Crakes (*Limnocorax flavirestra*), Goliath Herons (*Ardea goliath*)—the largest of the African herons, and then the Giant Kingfisher (*Megaceryle maxima*)—a crow size member of that family. The crocodiles slithered off into the water as our vehicles approached; one doesn't swim in African waters—if the crocodiles don't get you the bilharzia, that fluke-like parasite that invades the vital organs will—and if you survive these two there always are the islands and rocks in the water that turn into hippos.

The water area was productive of many more new birds such as the Openbilled Stork (*Anastomus lamelligerus*) whose English name is very descriptive; Hotentot Teal (*Anas punctata*); Dwarf Goose (*Nettapus auritus*) which is smaller than our teal; White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) which is the same as the European pelican but not our White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*); Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*); Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*); Hadedda (*Hagedashia hagedash*), an ibis whose raucous call sounds just like his name; and White-winged Black Terns (*Chlidonias leucoptera*), which are closely related to our Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*), flying over the water. The waders or shorebirds were represented by eleven species including the Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) which is about the size of our Least Sandpiper (*Erolia minutilla*); Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*), a close relative of our Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*); Curlew

Sandpiper (*Calidris testacea*); Water Dikkop (*Burhinus vermiculatus*), a large plover-like bird; and the Three-banded Sand Plover (*Charadrius tricollaris*), a bird slightly smaller than our Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) but with similar double black bands.

Early in the morning the Bantu game guards were sent to the fig forest to keep a sharp look-out for a black rhino—one of the really mean-tempered mammals—that was known to spend time in that area. This was our birding spot for the better part of the day since many varieties of birds come to this forest to feed on the figs. A Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone viridis*), with its long central tail feathers, looping the loop was a sight one expected only in a nature movie; then a Blue-mantled Flycatcher (*Trochocercus cyanomelas*) dive bombing and Ovambo Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter ovampensis*); and an African Broadbill (*Smithornis capensis*), formerly considered one of the flycatchers, but now placed in the *Eurylaimidae* family in which there are only 14 living species, mainly Asiatic with the African species somewhat aberrant. This was probably the best find of the day and the only time on the entire trip that we saw a Broadbill, which is flycatcher-like in behavior (the size of our *Empidonax*) but distinguished from them by its broad bill. Our bird was most accommodating, sitting on a low perch where it could be well observed. Another rarity of the fig forest was the beautiful Starred Robin (*Pegonocichla stellata*) which was not seen again although other thrushes, robins and related birds were comparatively common.

One of the large trees near the water area gave us our first Green Pigeons (*Treron calva*). While we were busy studying them perched in the top of the tree, to our great delight we spotted a Bush Baby (*Galagoides demidovii*), the smallest (four inches) of the African primates. Its large owl-like eyes immediately indicated its nocturnal habits and a daytime view is not a commonplace occurrence. If we hadn't been looking for birds, and especially the many four and five inch types that are so common in Africa, we might not have seen it. One of the anomalies of African birds is the tremendous contrast in size from the many large ones such as the five foot Secretary Bird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) to the many varieties of sunbirds, warblers and similar four and five inch birds. If any of you think our warblers are difficult to identify, don't try the African varieties (which are not related to ours) and especially avoid the genus "*Cisticola*" which almost became a dirty word. They not only all look alike but behave like our Le Conte's Sparrow (*Passerherbulus caudatus*) by coming to the top of the grass momentarily and then disappearing down under. The only compensation is their delightful English prefix names such as Wing-snapping, Piping, Zitting, Tinkling, Rattling, Wailing and Winding.

The next morning, again before breakfast, we visited a different habitat, a dry upland wood-edge area which brought us different species such as Greater (Indicator indicator) and Lesser (Indicator minor) Honey-guides, the parasitic birds related to the barbets that lead men and animals to bees' nests by uttering chattering cries and then making a different noise or keeping quiet when the objective is reached. The barbets were represented by the White-eared Barbet (*Buccanodon leucotis*), Black-collared Barbet (*Lybius torquatus*), Black-crowned Tinker Barbet (*Pogoniulus bilineatus*), and the Red-fronted Tinker Barbet (*Pogoniulus pusillus*) with its persistent clinking call note that sometimes is described as sounding like tapping on a small anvil and which to us is one of the sounds of Africa rather than the usually accepted beating of the drums.

What to some people is the loveliest bird in South Africa, the Gorgeous Bush-shrike (*Telophorus quadricolor*), as well as the beautiful Melba Finch (*Pytelia melba*) and a striking waxbill—the Pink-throated Twinspot (*Hypargos margaritatus*) were all found in the bushes. Numerous robins, sunbirds, weavers and starlings were in this same section. It is unfortunate that our

Starling (*Sternus vulgaris*) is the one that was brought to the United States. So many of them are truly beautiful birds with their iridescent greens and blues, but they probably require a more tropical climate since none of them are found in Europe.

Birds that must be seen to be believed are the hornbills . . . it doesn't seem possible that birds with such large casques on their bills would be able to fly. At Ndumu we saw the Trumpeter Hornbill (*Bycanistes buccinator*), Grey Hornbill (*Lophoceros nasutus*), Yellow-billed Hornbill (*Lophoceros flavirostris*) and Crowned Hornbill (*Lophoceros alboterminatus*).

On our way back to the camp area we were fortunate in seeing a white rhinoceros cow with a calf. The name white rhino is a misnomer . . . they are the same color as the ordinary rhinos. The name is derived from the Afrikaans owrk "wyt" which means wide in reference to the square lip and jaw of this specie in contrast with the more pointed jaw of the common variety. This is one of the greatly endangered species which the World Wildlife Fund is trying to save, and is found in comparatively few areas.

Our one full day at Ndumu gave us 140 different birds and we added 28 additional ones the next morning. Of the total of 168 birds, 54 were lifers for me . . . a tremendous number to be absorbed in a day and a half. Fortunately most of them were seen again and thus became more easily recognized.

This was our best day . . . you see . . . on the African Safari each day was better than the one before!

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT By St. Louis Audubon Society

Compiled by J. EARL COMFORT

Orchard Farm, Mo. (all points within a 15 mile diameter circle, center Orchard Farm as last year. Mostly along Mississippi River on Missouri side only; bottomlands and sloughs, 65%, weed-grown fields, 12%, tilled fields, 23%). December 26; 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. partly cloudy; temp. 21 to 24 above; wind NW, 8-11 m.p.h.: ground bare and hard frozen, river partly frozen, sloughs and lakes frozen solidly. 13 observers in 2 parties. Total party-hours 12 (9 on foot, 3 by car); total party-miles, 36 (3 on foot, 33 by car).

Mallard, 1212; black duck, 3; canvasback, 987; lesser scaup, 11; common goldeneye, 89; common merganser, 5; red-tailed hawk, 9; rough-legged hawk, 1; bald eagle, 6; marsh hawk, 7; sparrow hawk, 8; bobwhite, 9; killdeer, 1; herring gull, 43; ring-billed gull, 374; mourning dove, 26; yellow-shafted flicker, 19; pileated woodpecker, 2; red-bellied woodpecker, 6; red-headed woodpecker, 49; hairy woodpecker, 2; downy woodpecker, 5; horned lark, 62; blue jay, 14; crow, 11; black-capped chickadee, 12; Tufted titmouse, 7; white-breasted nuthatch, 4; brown creeper, 3; winter wren, 1; Carolina wren, 3; mockingbird, 2; robin, 13; cedar waxwing, 132; starling, 410; house sparrow, 311; eastern meadowlark, 4; brown-headed cowbird, 2; cardinal, 11; American goldfinch, 5; slate-colored junco, 121; tree sparrow, 34; white-throated sparrow, 7; swamp sparrow, 3; song sparrow, 9.

Total species: about 4055 individuals. Observers: Kathryn Arhos, Andy Bromet, Bill Brush, Earl Comfort, Mike Flieg, Wally George, Bob Guenther, Donald Hays, Earl Hath, Jimmy Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. Joel Massie, Winnifred Meloy.

OBSERVATIONS -- 1964 IN REVIEW

By J. EARL COMFORT

Although Sally Vasse found a rare glossy ibis near Swan Lake in Calhoun County, Illinois, on October 1st, her husband, Dick, gave us the bird of the year on November 9th when he identified an exceedingly rare (for our area) brant in a hunter's bag near Gilbert Lake in Jersey County, Illinois. Swan and Gilbert Lakes are part of the Calhoun unit of the National Wildlife Refuge. Dick supervises the Calhoun unit.

Last year Sally gave us the bird of the year when she identified a male Barrow's Goldeneye near Gilbert Lake. When better birds are located the Vasses will list them.

There were only 5 St. Louis Area species in 1964 worthy of special comment, the top 5 being the brant and glossy ibis mentioned, a whimbrel, pine grosbeak and 2 western kingbirds. The number 1 bird, the brant, was checked by Dave Harper of the Illinois Department of Conservation and J. W. Wannamaker of Principia College, Elsah, Illinois. The bird was mounted for display at Principia. The Whimbrel, the number 2 species, was identified by Steve Hanselmann's birding group at the Illinois Mississippi River levees below the Jefferson Barracks Bridge on May 22nd. Upon receipt of information from Steve, Dick and Mitzi Anderson and Earl Comfort located the bird at the same spot in the P.M. of the same day. Number 3 was a pine grosbeak by Jack Van Benthuyzen near Creve Coeur Lake in St. Louis County on January 18th. The 2 kingbirds were identified by John Willets at the levees on the 2nd of September. The bird ranked 4th was the ibis by Sally Vasse.

Some other rare species in our area in 1964 were white pelican, cattle egret, white ibis, oldsquaw, white-winged scoter and common scoter ducks, Mississippi Kite, Golden Eagle, turnstone, Hudsonian Godwit, buff-breasted sandpiper, northern phalarope, glaucous gull, red-shafted flicker, yellow-headed blackbird, red crossbill and Bachman's sparrow.

There was a composite list of 277 as compared with the total of 279 in 1963.

The warbler family led as a group with 35 species, the Fringillidae next with 34.

The bumper crop of 200 or better area listers consisted of Steve Hanselmann with 253; Kathryn Arhos, 243; John Willets, 238; Dr. Ralph Laffey, 238; Earl Comfort, 231; Earl Hath, 226; Bob Guenther, 218; Jack Van Benthuyzen, 217; Don Hays, 216; Sally Vasse, 212; Bill Brush, 204; Mike Flieg, 202; Andy Bromet, 201; and Ray Schlund an even 200. Ray, Bob, Don, Bill and Andy were new members of the "200 club". Steve was also the leader in 1963 as was Kathryn, in the feminine department, who was the sole 1964 female 200 lister. Helen Hill missed by 2 little species in her attempt to make the grade. Good luck in your 1965 listing, fellows and gals.

Your BULLETIN Observations reporter has a new address. Anyone wishing to report unusual observations may send report to Earl Comfort, 630 West Essex Ave., Kirkwood, Mo. 63122.

SQUEAKY

By B. GLENN SUTTERFIELD

He came to live with us quite by accident, as most wild birds do that find sanctuary in the home of people. My husband happened to pass on the road and noticed him trying desperately to climb to a hole high in a tree, out of which he had fallen. Looking the situation over, my husband decided there was no possible way under the circumstances to return the baby to the nest, so that he brought the little screech owl home.

We had lived most of our lives in the Ozarks and were familiar with mature screech owls sitting in hollow trees, as we walked in the woods. A nestling was something we had looked forward to seeing. My husband planned to take it back to the tree and find a way of getting the baby owl in the nest. Noticing it carried one wing in a peculiar manner, we had a veterinarian examine it. He told us the baby would never be able to fly. So we adopted it, knowing if we returned it, securing food would be out of the question; also that it would be caught by the first predator that happened along.

Our son named the little owl "Squeaky" since that was the only noise he was then capable of making. He showed no fear from the first, deciding pellets of hamburger were a good substitute for mice and settled down to life under a roof in our utility room. We placed a tree branch between a double window where he could survey the surrounding neighborhood. Here he dwelt in contentment. We placed a small box on the window sill; in this the little owl slept during the day, (or at least pretended to,) never missing a movement going on around him, with one eye open or both eyes partly closed.

Our house was located not far from an airport; he had an uncanny ability to locate planes. Some of them I could not see unless I gave them time to come into view. We were never able to discern whether he was able to do this by sight or sound, as owls are not supposed to be able to see too well in the daylight, but we thought he could see quite well. On cloudy days he led a normal life never sleeping at all. When a plane, hawk, or pigeon was spotted he uttered an "aark" and dived for the box to peep out with one eye.

Squeaky soon learned we arose at 6 a.m. for we fed him at that time. He always screeched on the hour, seldom missing the time five minutes one way or the other. We needed no other alarm.

At first we shut Squeaky up at night to keep him from prowling over the house. He was always quite willing to go into the cage since we bribed him with hamburger. After he became accustomed to us, we did not shut him up at night; he sat on his tree branch contentedly.

Occasionally he fell off this perch. A owl going clickety-clack across the floor in the middle of the night is not a pleasant sound to wake up to. One morning my husband woke to find squeaky perched on a bedside chair staring him in the face. This could have been a rude awakening for anyone who had imbibed to excess. Another time he managed to get into the bath tub and was very glad to be rescued.

Squeaky loved human companionship and would perch on our shoes, pick at our shoe laces until he untied them, perch on our shoulders, and nibble at our ears. Bare feet fascinated him. He was afraid of such items as fishing rods, water hose, and umbrellas. If one came in the room, he uttered "Aark" hiding fast. If we were absent for a short time, we were greeted by a low screech on our return, but if we were gone for two or three days, he drooped; we suspected him of pouting.

Television was something he adored. Sitting on the back of our chairs he would watch it by the hour. If we failed to get him to view television, he would try to fly to the floor, actually falling, head for the living room, and pause before a chair to be helped to his perch. At Christmas, he graced our tree. We probably had the only Christmas tree in the world with a screech owl.

The reaction of friends to our pet was amusing, for few people are familiar with the habits of owls. One lady asked if we weren't afraid it would grow large and attack us; another said Squeaky made her feel stupid, because the eyes of an owl are set in their heads exactly like the headlights of an automobile; they can look neither to left or right, without turning their

head. If they are drowsy, they stare at objects several minutes without moving.

Our unusual pet ate a variety of foods—chicken, bugs, worms, grasshoppers, fish—but most of all he relished a mouse. We were amazed such a small bird could swallow one whole. He loved to hide food; this instinct we had to watch, or the food would spoil. One day we gave him cantaloupe, which he relished in hot weather. Eating what he wanted, he hid what was left. Later in the day, we watched a long search for it; he acted as if he were puzzled about the disappearance. Occasionally he tired of all food, and would eat nothing for a day or two.

Sometimes we took our pet outside, but he never liked the wide open spaces. Our cute, plump little pet became a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The ears which were inconspicuous, shot straight up, the body seemed to lengthen inches; he resembled a tree trunk. Dogs terrorized him; we assumed either a dog or fox had injured the wing. This fear did not manifest itself if a cat appeared; cats are certainly natural enemies. When other birds spotted Squeaky, they fussed and fumed. If he were outside, not a word was uttered, but if we were inside the window, he quarreled back at them.

Screech owls make other sounds than a screeching; these are their hunting sound, supposed to petrify mice and other small creatures they feed on, the “aark” to show fright, and a “wolfwhistle,” uttered only when someone sneezes. No imitation of a sneeze could fool him.

In winter our kitchen light made a silhouette of him as he sat on the tree branch looking outside. For several nights I noticed a bumping outside the window and decided to investigate. Another screech owl was trying to get in. When we opened the window it came in, allowing itself to be picked up, although the gentleness might have been from fright. Our visitor was a beautiful rusty red, our owl was grey. This color difference in screech owls is a mystery to ornithologists. It appears in young and old birds, males and females alike. We let it stay all night, releasing it the next morning, but the owl returned for occasional visits as long as our Squeaky lived with us.

ST. LOUIS AUDUBON BULLETIN

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